

PEACE: Gold hunt's end at the box in the hole

The Urth list — 9 messages, 4 voices, 29 Oct 2002

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/3526>

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Michael Andre-Driussi — 29 Oct 2002, 17:16

Ahem.

Damien Broderick voiced an opinion of many readers when he proposed to Gene Wolfe that Weer found buried gold in that expedition with Lois. Gene Wolfe said no he did not. (This was all in an issue of "The New York Review of Science Fiction" a few years back.)

So the probability wave for that possibility collapsed. I checked it off the list ("Weer's sudden fortune at age 50 due to finding hidden gold") and moved on.

But the fact remains that the diggers seem to have hit a container of some kind: if it was not the strongbox, then the next most likely item would be a coffin. In order to be sure that it was not a strongbox with gold, they had to excavate enough to determine its size.

Yet it is a tad difficult to imagine them doing further excavation after Lois has pulled the gun on Weer. Whatever happens, it is not in the spirit of easy cooperation. So maybe she tells him to keep digging, and he does, and then they figure out it is a coffin. Then he gets the gun from her. (I don't think he kills her, even though there is a ready-dug grave right there.)

Weer confronts Lou Gold, then Sherry makes her visit. Sherry speaks of her "magic ring," and aside from the link to the title of this message (the spooky link between tomb and womb), what she describes can also be termed a ring of gold.

On another topic: I wrote before that the Bell Witch under Margaret Lorn's porch was real. That was rash of me, and I take it back: what I meant was that if there is a mystery or action in PEACE which could be solved by a ghostly presence, then it =is= solved that way. The "witch under the porch step" thing is there to establish that ghosts can be pinned down (see also Gold's Necronomicon; elm trees planted on graves); the ghost itself plays no role, and thus probably isn't there.

=mantis=

Jeff Veyera — 30 Oct 2002, 03:53 · follows Michael Andre-Driussi

Mantis wrote:

Weer confronts Lou Gold, then Sherry makes her visit. Sherry speaks of her "magic ring," and aside from the link to the title of this message (the spooky link between tomb and womb), what she describes can also be termed a ring of gold.

To which I reply:

I actually thought Sherry's reference to a "magic ring" women possess was a lot more vulgar in connotation. It certainly would seem to be in keeping with her character.

StoneOx17 — 30 Oct 2002, 18:20 · follows Jeff Veyera

Mantis writes, about the hole Weer dug with Lois (at the end of the Gold Hunt):

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If I remember correctly, this section is next to the Bell Witch section, with the porch step "tombstone."

I had assumed that they found a flat stone shaped roughly like the top of a treasure box, which Weer then used as a tombstone when he buried Lois in the hole they dug.

Mantis presciently disagrees:

(I don't think he kills her, even though there is a ready-dug grave right there.)

The fact that earlier, Lois said that she wasn't planning on digging up any graves takes on added significance in either case, whether they discover a coffin or whether Weer kills her.

Stone Ox

Roy C. Lackey — 30 Oct 2002, 20:15 · follows StoneOx17

mantis wrote:

But the fact remains that the diggers seem to have hit a container of some kind: if it was not the strongbox, then the next most likely item would be a coffin. In order to be sure that it was not a strongbox with gold, they had to excavate enough to determine its size.

In the further cause of pedantry, I should point out that there doesn't seem to have been a coffin, any more than there had been a strongbox. The text reads: "My shovel had struck a stone, causing the blade to ring, and in a spot of moonlight I had seen the glint of metal in Lois's hand."

The gold never existed; Lou Gold made the whole story up, including the geographical reference points they were using to locate it. People don't locate graveyards in or near creek beds, for obvious reasons. Sugar creek had water in it at the time the gold was supposedly buried. It was a dry creek bed at the time Weer and Lois dug there, but would have been subject to flooding in the wet season. It is very unlikely that anyone would bury a body where it was commonly subject to being washed out, whether the grave site was hallowed ground or a clandestine burial. Also, in the 19th century, most coffins would have been made of wood, which would not cause a shovel blade to ring when struck.

Yet it is a tad difficult to imagine them doing further excavation after Lois has pulled the gun on Weer. Whatever happens, it is not in the spirit of easy cooperation. So maybe she tells him to keep digging, and he does,

and then they figure out it is a coffin. Then he gets the gun from her.
(I don't think he kills her, even though there is a ready-dug grave right there.)

I think the digging stopped when Lois pulled the gun.

Weer confronts Lou Gold, then Sherry makes her visit. Sherry speaks of her "magic ring," and aside from the link to the title of this message (the spooky link between tomb and womb), what she describes can also be termed a ring of gold.

Speaking of magic rings: did Lois ever employ hers in her quest for gold? Weer was certainly hoping so, and planned to "bring a flask, and make certain we had a blanket to spread upon the ground". They were two days digging that trench, and they were there by moonlight.

-Roy

Roy C. Lackey — 30 Oct 2002, 20:43 · follows Roy C. Lackey

Stone Ox quoted and wrote:

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If I remember correctly, this section is next to the Bell Witch section, with the porch step "tombstone."

Correct. But, according to the web site mantis found, the Bell Witch was never buried, so there never was a tombstone. Margaret was just putting Den on. Not to mention that Robertson county Tennessee was at least the entire width of Kentucky from the nearest possible location for the Lorns' farm.

I had assumed that they found a flat stone shaped roughly like the top of a treasure box, which Weer then used as a tombstone when he buried Lois in the hole they dug.

Why would a murderer mark the grave of his victim?

-Roy

Michael Andre-Driussi — 30 Oct 2002, 22:53 · follows Roy C. Lackey

Roy wrote:

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Fair enough.

The gold never existed; Lou Gold made the whole story up, including the geographical reference points they were using to locate it.

Well now you're wrong: the gold historically exists and has never been found! (I know, you mean it was never where they were digging.)

I will go further and say that even though the gold wasn't there, still the meeting between Kate and Quantrill really did happen: when Weer sees Kate and Q it is as valid as when he sees Kate and Hannah. Ghosts are valid; Kate has already been established as one of the more coherent ghosts of the novel; any ghostly memory channeled via Kate is valid.

Furthermore, this means that Lou Gold, even while "forging" the diary, was in some sense channeling Kate. Seems outrageous, I know, but then the fact that his forged Necronomicon somehow "works" is a pointer; as well as the fact that, as I've written above, Ghost Kate is already established in the text.

Roy quoted Stone Ox:

I had assumed that they found a flat stone shaped roughly like the top of a treasure box, which Weer then used as a tombstone when he buried Lois in the hole they dug.

Why would a murderer mark the grave of his victim?

While I argue against Weer murdering Lois, still, the text is clear that ghosts can be pinned down and this is why Weer would use the stone: not to mark the grave (though it would do that as well) but to pin the ghost down so she wouldn't come after him. Like a stake through the heart of a vampire (iirc the old tradition of pinning them down rather than turning them to dust).

Roy quoted me and wrote:

Weer confronts Lou Gold, then Sherry makes her visit. Sherry speaks of her "magic ring," and aside from the link to the title of this message (the spooky link between tomb and womb), what she describes can also be termed a ring of gold.

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More follow-up: while Sherry's "magic ring" can be riddled as "ring of gold," she pointedly puts down conventional marriage where the wife stays home and does chores -- she wants a life of adventure (rather like Olivia and Lois).

On to Roy's wondering about Lois doling out sexual favors. Maybe. Seems likely (shades of Olivia and Peacock in the cave). How ugly was their parting? Seems pretty ugly. He seems to be keeping the gun against her possible return.

=mantis=

StoneOx17 — 31 Oct 2002, 12:45 · follows Michael Andre-Driussi

Roy asks

Speaking of magic rings: did Lois ever employ hers in her quest for gold? Weer was certainly hoping so, and planned to "bring a flask, and make certain we had a blanket to spread upon the ground". They were two days digging that trench, and they were there by moonlight.

Maybe Wolfe has answered this. Quoting from Peace:

"... Den, I want you to help me find it."

About an hour later we loaded Lois's pick and shovel into the trunk of my car, and set out for Sugar Creek.

What were Lois and Den doing during that hour?

-- Stone Ox

StoneOx17 — 01 Nov 2002, 01:14 · follows StoneOx17

Mantis quotes:

Roy quoted Stone Ox:

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That's right. If Weer laid the stone down flat (like a porch step) only he would know it marked Lois's grave. Suppose he kills her (most likely, the gun went off accidentally while they were fighting for it). He now has a body, and a grave and stone at hand. I think Wolfe very deliberately placed that section about the Bell witch and the porch step "tombstone" in the middle of Lois's story (i.e., Weer's memories of Lois elicited his memories of the Bell witch episode) because of these parallels.

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Roy C. Lackey — 01 Nov 2002, 09:43 · follows StoneOx17

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Like mantis, I don't think Weer murdered her, and the way the text reads doesn't seem to indicate that he killed her accidentally, either. She told him why she had the gun *after* he took

it away from her, or so I read it. Besides, as mantis wrote the other day: "How ugly was their parting? Seems pretty ugly. He seems to be keeping the gun against her possible return." And, as *everybody* knows, guns don't work against ghosts! <g>

-Roy